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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, November 18, 1985.

Hon. LES ASPIN,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Enclosed is a report outlining the Seapower Subcommittee's findings and recommendations concerning the Nation's maritime strategy and the forces needed to support that strategy, the "600-ship Navy."

The subcommittee examined in detail the efficacy of the maritime strategy; the appropriateness of the Navy's investment decisions to the strategy; and the long-term affordability of the Navy's plans. We also considered the viability of alternative strategic concepts for both their deterrent and budgetary implications. As part of this effort the subcommittee held extensive hearings on the Navy's next generation nuclear attack submarines, the SSN-21.

The subcommittee finds that the maritime strategy is, in fact, a proper naval component to national-level military strategy, and that the 600-ship Navy as currently described is a reasonable and balanced approach to meeting the force structure requirements of that strategy. The subcommittee is unconvinced that other maritime strategies would provide similar deterrent or warfighting capabilities. There is reason for concern, however, that constraints on defense resources will make the attainment of the 600-ship Navy increasingly difficult. For this reason the subcommittee recommends that the Navy take certain steps to reduce the cost of the 600-ship Navy without undue harm to its modernization, readiness or ability to sustain wartime operations.

I shall appreciate your early approval of the report so that it may be printed.

With kindest regards,
Sincerely,

CHARLES E. BENNETT,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Seapower and Strategic and Critical Materials.

Enclosure.

Approved for printing:
Les Aspin.

SEAPOWER SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ON THE 600-SHIP NAVY

Summary of Major Issues and Conclusions

The committee's examination of the strategic need for a 600-ship fleet and the Navy's plans for attaining that fleet reveals a number of major issues. These issues—which form the basis for this report—involve the fundamentals of defense resource allocation as they apply to naval forces. In summary they include the following:

Is the Navy's maritime strategy in consonance with the broader needs and goals of national strategy?

Is the Navy planning to build the right kind of ships?

Does the Navy's plan for buying ships match budgetary reality? Is the plan affordable given likely levels of defense spending over the next several years?

Are there alternative maritime strategies and naval procurement plans that would better match both national interests and budgetary constraints?

The committee held hearings on these issues in June and September of 1985. Complemented by the regular series of hearings held as part of the authorization process, these additional sessions developed a broad body of information on the Navy's strategy and procurement plans, as well as the views of many who disagree with various aspects of the Navy's approach. This study is based to a large extent on the results of these hearings.

Based on the extensive body of information available to the subcommittee on the maritime strategy and the 600-ship Navy a number of conclusions can be drawn.

First, the Navy has devised a set of planning assumptions that properly fit its role in the national military strategy. That planning mechanism—the maritime strategy—is a sound and reasonable basis for establishing the Navy's procurement program.

The maritime strategy, with its emphasis on flexibility of response and preservation of warfighting options, can improve conventional force deterrence.

Navy ship procurement plans include a reasonable balance of the proper kinds of ships, given strategic requirements and the nature of the threat.

There remain significant questions as to the affordability of the 600-ship Navy and the ability of the Navy to support the maritime strategy under conditions of little or no budgetary growth.

Nevertheless, simply buying cheaper, less versatile and less capable weapons is not necessarily the way out of the

budget dilemma, at least not without a major reordering of national interests and commitments.

The subcommittee could not identify an alternative maritime strategy that better matches the requirements levied by U.S. vital interests and world geography.

In addition, the subcommittee finds that the Navy should take the following actions with respect to procurement of the 600-ship Navy:

Continue efforts to reduce the cost of buying and maintaining the fleet, such as judicious use of competition and fixed-price contracts.

Examine on an ongoing basis the strategic and tactical requirements for numbers and kinds of ships with an eye towards reducing costs where possible.

Prevent the recurrence of a "hollow" fleet—short on munitions and spare parts—as the fleet is modernized within more austere defense budgets.

The Need for Naval Forces

That the United States needs strong maritime forces is an unrefuted conclusion. A seafaring nation from its inception, this country continues to rely heavily on the world's oceans for its economic vitality and military strength. The United States is the largest trading nation in a world where almost all goods in international trade are transported by sea. The Office of Technology Assessment points out that the United States has trade valued at $1 billion or more with each of 58 other countries. In time of war or national emergency the sea lanes would become vital conduits for both the material needed to sustain the war effort and the raw commodities used in military and civilian manufacture. The Navy, for example, estimates that over 90 percent of the equipment and supplies needed to sustain a war effort would have to be carried by ships, and even with stockpiling of strategic and critical materials for the essential parts of the defense sector of the economy it is likely that the civilian economy would continue to depend heavily on seaborne supplies of raw materials for its viability.

In addition to these commercial and logistics interests the United States is linked to the seas through a series of 43 formal alliances and treaties with 43 countries. These alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Rio Treaty, are crucial to the sustenance of U.S. security interests around the world; yet, they also demand continued access to the seas for our naval forces and commercial ships to prevent these treaties from becoming meaningless diplomatic gestures.

In short, the need for naval forces and the planning for their employment is based on the larger, overarching requirement that the U.S. government defend its citizens adequately. The most vital function a government can perform, this defense is of necessity shaped by the need to sustain the vital interests of the United States, the expanse of world geography, and the threat posed by the military forces of our potential adversaries.

Since the early 1960's and the lessons learned from the Cuban missile crisis, for example, the Soviet Union has expanded and improved its once defensive-oriented, coastal Navy into a first-class, blue water fleet. Now capable of operating worldwide to perform a variety of naval missions, the Soviet Navy boasts some 30 percent more surface combatants than the United States and over 370 submarines. Although the Soviets continue to invest heavily (in absolute terms) in the surface vessels, aircraft and weapons that will eventually improve significantly their ability to project naval power ashore, over the years their naval investment in relative terms has favored the attack submarine. Capable of denying control of the seas to the United States as well as protecting an ever-growing strategic nuclear force at sea, the Soviet submarine force—together with other Soviet naval units—presents a clear challenge to the continued, unimpeded access to the world's oceans needed by the United States and its allies.

The combination of these factors means that the United States cannot afford to have a naval posture that would yield anything but clear maritime superiority. Indeed, achieving and maintaining such superiority should be a national goal that transcends time and political consideration. Achieving maritime superiority, however, involves having a cogent strategic plan, making the correct choices of resources to carry out that plan, and having the national will to see it to completion.

Choosing the "Right" Navy—The Maritime Strategy

The Navy's response to the demands imposed by the correlation of national interests, geography, and potential threat is its "maritime strategy." An integral part of the national military strategy, the maritime strategy takes as its antecedent elements the goals of that broader strategy: deterrence across a broad range of possible conflicts; defense of the nation as far forward as possible; and preparation and planning for global warfare to be waged in conjunction with our allies. The strategy strongly supports the goal of maritime superiority for U.S. naval forces.

Defining the Maritime Strategy

As explained by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman in hearings before the subcommittee the maritime strategy has as its specific goals the following:

> Control of Crisis: that is, the application of naval force through peacetime presence, surveillance and show of force to prevent non-hostile situations from becoming hostile. This amounts to maintaining the peace in what Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James Watkins calls "the era of violent peace."
>
> Deterrence of War: on a continuum with crisis control, deterrence of war places further emphasis on naval forces-in-being, up through the limited application of force to deter further, more widespread conflict.
>
> Successful War Prosecution Should Deterrence Fail: to include the destruction of enemy maritime forces, protection of sea lines of communication, support of land battles,

and securing war termination on terms favorable to the United States.

Our maritime strategy is, first and foremost, a planning tool—a set of basic assumptions about how U.S. naval forces would be employed in support of the national goals outlined earlier. Such planning eventually leads to specific decisions on the allocation of funds between investment (procurement and research) and operations and among investment opportunities. The Navy indicates that this is, indeed, the basis for the 600-ship fleet that it has outlined.

On the other hand, the maritime strategy is not a plan for conducting wartime operations at sea, even though some of its critics address it in that fashion. Such operational planning is, by law, the responsibility of the unified commanders of the military forces. The maritime strategy is more a yardstick for buying, training, and equipping our naval forces; planning for their actual use falls to the unified commanders-in-chief.

Alternative Views on the Maritime Strategy

This latter point leads to the first of several criticisms of the maritime strategy brought forward in hearings before the subcommittee. In brief, critics claim that the maritime strategy:

leads to misallocation of resources;
has goals so broad that it is too expensive in an absolute sense;
is too provocative toward our potential adversaries; and
is not a firm enough basis for force planning.

Charges that the maritime strategy causes resources to be misallocated are among the most comprehensive. They extend from criticisms of national level strategic decisions to choices about specific numbers and kinds of ships. For example, some critics of the Navy's maritime strategy claim that it is the wrong strategy for either deterring the Soviet Union or planning to fight against the Soviets, a major power in the European and Asian continents. They postulate that both history and current Soviet defense spending and deployment patterns demonstrate that Soviet naval forces would play a relatively minor role in the decisive battles that—in time of war—would take place on the Eurasian land mass. Therefore, such critics claim, any naval strategy that proposes to do more than the minimum necessary to support the land battle—such as the maritime strategy—would siphon resources away from those forces likely to be more effective in defeating the Soviets on land.

Another criticism is that the maritime strategy leads to suboptimal allocations between investment in new weapons and research, and spending for improved readiness and force sustainability. Although this charge might be viewed as part of the larger critique that the operators of the military forces—the unified commanders—have an ineffective voice in resource decisions taken among those with a view toward long-range planning, critics claim that it is particularly true given the maritime strategy's push for force expansion and modernization.

The second major criticism—that the maritime strategy's goals are so broad as to make it unaffordable in an absolute sense—expresses the point of view that within the bounds of fiscal reality the Navy simply cannot buy forces sufficient to accomplish all of the tasks imposed by the maritime strategy. The critics' choice in this case seems to be the creation of a less ambitious strategy that would somehow better match the predicted availability of resources.

The subcommittee also heard testimony that the maritime strategy is too provocative toward the Soviet Union. Some, for example, claim that the maritime strategy's prescription for an ability to operate far forward near the Soviet land mass, attack land targets supporting naval forces, and destroy the Soviet Navy would lead to nuclear war at sea and perhaps on land. These critics point out that it is inconsistent to be at once moving to raise the nuclear threshold in NATO Europe by improving our conventional defenses while at the same time espousing a maritime strategy that could well lower the nuclear threshold at sea.

The final criticism of the maritime strategy's utility as a force planning tool is that it misstates the priority of national military objectives and, therefore is incapable of providing the proper basis for force planning in support of those objectives. Some, for example, note that a number one objective should be the ability to intervene in third-world crisis situations, the kind of events that have happened repeatedly over the last forty years. The maritime strategy fails to do this, they say, because it overemphasizes large-scale force projection to the detriment of this intervention capability. Similarly, these critics claim that an emphasis on the force projection task works against planning for adequate and proper sea-control forces.

Subcommittee Findings Concerning the Maritime Strategy

In the broadest sense the maritime strategy is in keeping with and is supportive of the national military strategy as articulated by President Reagan and Secretary of Defense Weinberger. In addition, on their own merits the goals of the maritime strategy are reasonable and logical in light of the importance of the seas to this country and the breadth of the ocean areas over which our interests range.

The maritime strategy provides a better naval deterrent to Soviet aggression than the more limited, defensively-oriented alternatives the subcommittee considered. It does not set *a priori* limits on the application of naval power or cede certain geographic areas to Soviet hegemony. Rather, the maritime strategy emphasizes the inherent flexibility and endurance of naval forces in preventing or containing conflict.

These same desirable characteristics of naval forces would likely make them a major contributor to the successful conclusion of a general conflict with the Soviet Union. History demonstrates that control of the land masses, without concurrent control of the seas, provides an insufficient basis for victory in general war. The maritime strategy's conceptual inclusion of naval strike warfare against land targets has not been done to the exclusion of the more traditional Navy role of sea control. Rather, the strategy has reempha-

sized sea control in its concepts of the attack submarines' role and by explicitly recognizing the mission of strategic sealift as a major Navy task.

Neither is the maritime strategy a "go it alone" approach. It instead includes planning for global coalition warfare that would be waged in conjunction with U.S. allies. This would be especially true in certain geographic areas and for certain kinds of naval systems, like naval mines and diesel submarines. The strategy also envisions a substantial contribution by the U.S. Air Force to all naval missions.

This is not to say that the present maritime strategy would be the best strategy under very different world conditions or under a major change in the level of resources available for defense. Although strategically sound it fosters questions about the continued availability of the resources necessary to carry it to fruition. And while it does not appear that a limitation on defense resources to levels less than originally conceived by this Administration is sufficient reason to discard the strategy in favor of a more limited approach, questions remain as to the robustness of the strategy under tighter resource constraints.

Naval Forces To Support the Maritime Strategy—The 600-Ship Navy

The Administration's response to the requirements of the maritime strategy is the 600-ship Navy, a shorthand term connoting not only an overall force level goal but also a specific force structure within that total. Ideally this force structure should derive from the tasks generated by the maritime strategy and the requirements for force expansion, modernization, readiness, and sustainability they imply. Beyond these considerations the 600-ship Navy is also a readily discernable symbol of the drive to attain maritime superiority for the United States.

Although the current Administration has made a very substantial effort to articulate an overall maritime strategy, Navy planning for specific force structure goals is not without precedent. Throughout the mid-to-late 1970's Navy leaders testified to the need for a fleet of about 600 ships to be achieved by the mid-1980's. In 1975, for example, then Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Holloway, recommended a force structure within the 600-ship total that was very similar in many respects to that planned by the current Administration.

The 600-Ship Navy Defined

The Navy indicates that its 600-ship fleet is the minimum force needed to satisfy the requirements of the maritime strategy. It includes the following:

15 carrier battle groups;
4 battleship surface action groups;
100 nuclear attack submarines;
an unspecified number of ballistic missile submarines;
amphibious shipping to lift the assault echelon of a marine amphibious force plus a marine amphibious brigade (roughly 48,000 troops plus their equipment);

100–110 frigates;
31 mine countermeasure ships; and
a variety of support ships.

The following table shows how these force objectives compare with current Navy forces and the naval forces of five years ago.

Ship type	Number of ships			
	600-Ship Navy objective	Force as of Sept. 30, 1980	Force as of Sept. 30, 1985	Difference between current force and objective
Aircraft carriers	15	13	13	−2
Battleships	4	0	2	−2
Battle group escorts	137	122	99	−38
Frigates	101	71	110	+9
Attack submarines	100	79	100	−2
Small combatants		3	6	+6
Total, combatants	357	288	330	−27
Amphibious ships	75	66	62	−13
Mine warfare ships	31	3	3	−28
Replenishment ships	69	343	53	−16
Material support ships	27	20	25	−2
Fleet support ships	33	21	31	−4
Total, other ships	235	152	174	−61
Strategic submarine force (SSBN's)	(1)	40	37	
Total all ships	600+	480	541	About 90

[1] Unstated

Source: Department of the Navy

The table shows that substantial progress has been made towards the 600-ship goal over the past five years, due mainly to delivery of ships authorized during previous administrations. In addition, all of the ships needed to make up the overall shortfall in the 600-ship total have been authorized.

Nevertheless, two additional concerns are evidenced in these data. First is the need to fill shortfalls in the numbers of ships in particular areas, principally amphibious shipping, battlegroup escorts, and mine warfare ships. Second is the continuing requirement to modernize the force within the numerical totals. This latter point includes both the replacement of older ships with newer versions and an ongoing modernization effort for ships already in the fleet. Filling shortfalls and continuing to modernize are two major ways of assuring that the 600-ship Navy reaches its full potential.

Naval aviation units to support the carrier battle groups and for antisubmarine warfare are also included in the 600-ship fleet and include 14 active carrier air wings (an increase from 13 today), 2 reserve carrier air wings, 24 active maritime patrol squadrons, and 13 reserve maritime patrol squadrons. The 600-ship Navy also includes a growing strategic sealift capability. Although not included in the 600-ship total, the Navy plans eventually to control 25 mari-

time pre-positioning ships, 116 ready reserve force ships, and 12 other support units of various types.

How the Navy Derives the 600-Ship Force

In practical terms the Navy has distilled the requirements of the maritime strategy into demands for placement of carrier and battleship battlegroups, attack submarines, amphibious ships, and replenishment groups in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf. Paralleling peacetime deployment patterns, these stepped-up numbers of battlegroups, submarines, and support units drive the 600-ship requirement. The Navy indicates that the following planning assumptions for wartime deployment of its battle forces are the basis for the 600-ship fleet:

Area	*Forces*
Mediterranean Sea	3 carrier battlegroups 1 battleship surface action group 2 underway replenishment groups
Atlantic Ocean	4 carrier battle groups 1 battleship surface action group 3 underway replenishment groups
Western Pacific Ocean	4 carrier battlegroups 1 battleship surface action group 3 underway replenishment groups
Eastern Pacific Ocean	2 carrier battlegroups 1 underway replenishment group
Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf	2 carrier battlegroups 1 battlegroup surface action group 1 underway replenishment group

(NOTE.—A carrier battlegroup nominally includes 1 carrier, 2 cruisers, 4 destroyers, and 4 frigates. A battleship surface action group includes a battleship, 2 cruisers, 4 destroyers, and 4 frigates. Each underway replenishment group includes 7 replenishment ships plus 1 destroyer and 3 frigates.)

A key assumption in these planning factors, which the subcommittee fully endorses is the rejection of the 1970's concept of "swinging" carrier battlegroups from the Pacific to the Atlantic in time of war. Certainly the growing importance of the Pacific Basin to the United States, the increasing Soviet threat in the Pacific, and the uncertainty surrounding future basing arrangements make it impractical to plan for such a windfall.

Why the 600-Ship Fleet?

With the Navy's notional plan for coverage of the world's oceans and with the carrier battlegroup and attack submarine the centerpiece of those plans, it is relatively straightforward to derive the size and composition of the fleet based on planning factors for the protection and support of the battlegroups. What is less apparent, however, is the foundation for the planning factors themselves:

how the numbers and mix of ships for battlegroups are derived and the robustness of the results. This has led some observers to claim that the 600-ship fleet and its specific composition are less a matter of analytic rigor than a creature of budget expectations, internal Navy fiscal constraints, and tradeoffs among the Navy's warfare communities. Whatever the effect of these bureaucratic factors, the subcommittee concludes that the Navy's experience and knowledge derived from daily contact with the Soviet Navy on the high seas and analytic and war-gaming results provide a firm basis for Navy programming decisions.

The specific mix of ship types the Navy has chosen to build and the quality of those ships are probably more important than whether the fleet has some specific number of ships once it has achieved some minimum level. The Navy has embarked on a program to build very capable, technologically sophisticated ships. This approach, in turn, is supportive of the demands of the ambitious, offensive-oriented maritime strategy. It is also in consonance with the subcommittee's general view that the United States should be building in peacetime ships that are relatively large, complex, expensive and take a long time to build, because this country can more easily mass produce smaller, less capable ships in time of emergency. This approach also supports the concept that the Navy should contain, in general, more technologically sophisticated ships that take advantage of U.S. strengths in technology and personnel. The potential downside to this approach—that by concentrating our naval capability in relatively few ships the United States could find itself unable to respond adequately to simultaneous, lower level crises around the world—is not of sufficient magnitude to warrant a change in this approach, assuming continued adherence to a plan that will fill the force structure shortfalls noted earlier.

The balance among various types of ships in the Navy's plan is another important facet of the issue of force mix. The Navy indicates that its 600-ship fleet is properly balanced among surface, submarine, and aviation assets. Nonetheless, there are those who believe that, at the margin, more leverage could be gained from investment in nuclear attack submarines than other kinds of warships. Still others believe that the Navy is shortchanging its sea control forces—like frigates, antisubmarine helicopters and smaller aviation-capable ships—to pay for the larger ships that some more closely associate with force projection.

The key point in the Navy's argument for a balanced force is that it is balanced in support of its maritime strategy and against the current and projected threat. That strategy combines power projection, sea control and strategic sealift tasks. Those who advocate heavier investment in sea control forces to the exclusion of others are also advocating—explicitly or implicitly—a strategy oriented away from the power projection mission. Although there are always likely to be tradeoffs in choosing ships at the margin, the strategic choices imposed by the strategy and the threat seem fairly clear.

But this is not to say that the balance the Navy is seeking in its 600-ship fleet can be a static goal; rather, the force balance and its underlying strategy must be dynamic in adapting to changes in the threat and the international scene. For example, continued empha-

sis by the Soviets on enlarging and improving significantly their force of nuclear attack submarines could well place greater demands on our own antisubmarine warfare forces.

The SSN-21: An Example of a Major Ship Decision

The Navy has proposed the SSN-21 nuclear attack submarine as the successor to the Los Angeles-class attack submarine and as the primary attack submarine for the U.S. Navy for the twenty-first century. Although Navy budget projections show the initial long-lead authorization request in fiscal year 1987, the subcommittee has held extensive hearings on the strategic rationale for and the design of this submarine.

From a technology standpoint, there appears to be little doubt that a new generation of attack submarine is needed. Although it has undergone substantial improvement over its lifetime the Los Angeles-class, with its 1960's design, is rapidly approaching the end of its modification capability. As the Soviet submarine threat continues to grow in number, technological sophistication, and above all, quieting, current and previous generations of U.S. attack submarines will be hard pressed to keep up with the newer Soviet entries. With its larger weapons suite, more sophisticated sensor and combat system, and major improvements in ship quieting that cannot be implemented on the smaller Los Angeles-class ships the SSN-21 should move the U.S. submarine fleet back to a position of relative advantage over the Soviets.

There is also a readily identifiable strategic need for a new submarine. Increasing numbers of Soviet submarines and the multiplicity of missions now required of our own attack submarines--coupled with the ever-present need to replace older ships—make it imperative that the Navy get moving with a new generation of attack submarines.

Nevertheless, although the strategic need for the new submarine is clear, the committee has been very interested in the efficacy of the ship's design as it relates to its basic capabilities. In its examination of the tradeoffs between cost, quieting, speed and depth capability, for example, the Navy has chosen a technologically low-risk path that emphasizes quieting of the ship while limiting overall cost.

The subcommittee found the Navy's reasoning to be well founded in this basic decision. Nonetheless, there appears to be both the need and the opportunity for the Navy to push technology development in a number of areas, including those that would allow the construction of a faster and deeper-diving submarine as a follow on effort to the SSN-21. In addition, in order to achieve the SSN-21's full combat potential as quickly as possible the Navy must vigorously pursue the development of the combat system for the SSN-21 if the best blend of technological sophistication, capability, and timing and cost consideration is to be achieved.

Affordability and Timing of the 600-Ship Navy

Buying, operating and maintaining the 600-ship Navy has been and is likely to remain an expensive proposition. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), for example, notes that between 1980 and

1985 the Navy's budget grew by over 40 percent in real (inflation-adjusted) terms. The current Administration has devoted nearly half again as much to shipbuilding as its predecessor. At the same time there has been significant real growth in the Navy's operations and maintenance and research and development accounts.

Although it appears that the large budget growth experienced by the Navy during the first five years of the current Administration will not be needed to sustain the 600-ship effort, continued real increases of at least 3 percent will be required for the next ten years or so. CBO notes that between 3 and 5 percent real growth will be required, depending on whether the real price of weapons increases over time and the way in which operating costs change with force size. Navy Secretary Lehman agrees with the 3 percent figure, noting that, in real terms, the cost of Navy weapons has generally decreased over the past few years. He also cites the Navy's continued efforts to bring maintenance costs down as evidence of the Navy's ability to stay within the 3 percent figure.

Linked to questions about the cost of the 600-ship Navy are issues related to the timing of its attainment. Although the Navy notes that it will reach a force of 600 ships by 1989, it will remain considerably short of its force goals for some time, even with sustained budget growth. The General Accounting Office (GAO), for example, noted in testimony before the subcommittee that the Navy won't achieve its goal for amphibious ships until 1994. Indeed, GAO noted that even by the year 2000 the Navy will not reach all of its 600-ship Navy force goals. The CBO projected that although the Navy's procurement plan will eventually meet its force objectives for ships, such will not be the case for aircraft because of a mismatch between the procurement plan and current aircraft force goals.

It is of particular concern to the subcommittee that current and projected attempts to reduce the federal deficit will place ever-increasing pressure for reductions in the defense budget, in general, and the Navy's share in particular. The 3 percent real growth target for the 600-ship Navy may be difficult to achieve.

A number of suggestions have been made for accommodating to this austerity, should it continue. Some would attempt to preserve the force balance of the maritime strategy but with lower numbers of ships or older ships; others would say that the maritime strategy is unaffordable and that a new strategy is needed to replace it. The Navy would argue that even if overall DOD growth is diminished the Navy share of the budget should be adjusted to maintain the 600-ship program. More likely, however, is the prospect that the Navy will absorb some share of the budget reductions by stretching its shipbuilding and aircraft programs, delaying ship retirements, and cutting back on operations and support.

The CBO also noted that the Navy could attempt to build less expensive ships than those it now plans. A lower cost guided missile destroyer, a cruiser carrying vertical/short take-off and landing aircraft, and diesel-electric submarines are among the suggested possibilities.

Still another approach would be to build fewer of the large sophisticated ships the Navy now plans and to offset this reduction

with the purchase of smaller, less versatile ships in an attempt to satisfy the requirements of the maritime strategy.

What is not at all clear is that the naval forces designed to support some other strategic plan would be less expensive than the 600-ship Navy. A common denominator for many of these concepts is larger numbers of simpler—and presumably cheaper—weapons or, alternatively, simple platforms carrying sophisticated weapons. It is not self-evident, however, that these kinds of forces would be less expensive when all factors, including manpower, operating costs, and the numbers needed to be strategically effective are considered.

There is clearly reason for concern, however, about the effect of the deficit crisis on the ability of the United States to achieve maritime superiority and to buy and maintain adequate forces for the 600-ship Navy. Certainly it makes more sense for the Navy and the Congress to plan towards realistic budget levels than to be overly optimistic as to what may be achieved. Nonetheless, at this time the subcommittee sees no need to revamp the maritime strategy on the basis of projected fiscal constraints. Although there is a need for an ongoing examination of the Navy's plan, the subcommittee has seen no evidence that buying cheaper, less versatile, less capable ships, aircraft and weapons will satisfy the national military strategy or, more generally, U.S. defense interests.

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